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Citrus growers: don't blow up your colouring rooms

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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CITRUS GROWERS . . .

Don't Blow Up Your Colouring Rooms

There have been several dangerous incidents associated with the use of acetylene in citrus colouring chambers recently, and growers are warned to take care when using this explosive gas.

Two of these incidents involved explosions, one resulting in the destruction of the room (as shown by the accompanying photographs) and the other very nearly causing severe injury to the operator. The other occasions involved fires in a chamber.

The fault common to both of the explosions was the use of a bright element radiator in the colouring room, especially at the time of maximum gas development.

This occurs just after the carbide has been placed in the water.

It seems that although the amount of gas produced from a normal charge completely dispersed through the chamber will not constitute an explosive mixture, the localised concentration of the gas close to the generator while the reaction is proceeding could result in an explosive mixture being formed.

Obviously it is dangerous to use a heating element in a colouring room charged with acetylene, especially at charging time. It is always advisable to finish heating the room and have the element turned off before introducing the charge.

It is important too that any electrical switches or motors (such as on the fan) should be outside the chamber.

Some growers are haphazard in their use of carbide in colouring rooms, particularly in the amounts they use.

Your local Horticultural Instructor will tell you how much carbide should be used in your colouring room, and how to use it for best results—and safety.
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